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BRIEF NOTES

A Babylonian representation of a jumping mouse

THE STUDY of old-Egyptian zoology is easier than that of the old-Babylonian. The many pictures and the colored hieroglyphics show a large number of species and give evidence of the ability of the Egyptians for morphological observation. Babylonia has but few representations of animals left. The Babylonian demonology created mixed forms of animal and human parts, and the tendency to represent supernatural beings led to unnatural pictures. These designs prevail and cause the impression of a lack of morphological ability in the Babylonian art.

Real zoological specimens are rare and it is a misfortune when they are lost. This is what has happened to one which was pointed out to me in the Metropolitan Museum and which has since disappeared. It was made from dark green slate, somewhat flat, and pierced through the middle at the greatest width. It was to be worn on a string suspended about the neck. One side was almost plain and showed engraved animals, as is common on old seal cylinders. I judged it to be an amulet imitating a seal. But the other sides of the object showed the configuration of an animal about to jump. I immediately recognized (not a kangaroo, as was suggested to me but) the desert jumping mouse (*Dipus Aegyptiacus*). The tail and the ears had almost gone. The tibia of the jumping mouse is twice the length of the femur, exactly as in this piece. The paws and toes were also characteristic of the jumping mouse. The lost specimen showed a very good perception on the part of the Babylonian artist for characteristic zoological details and the ability to present those details in simple form. The jumping mouse is found on the borders of the Babylonian desert, and is eaten by the rustics. It is mentioned in Isaiah 66.17 along with the prohibited pig.

FELIX VON OEFELE

New York

A Jewish mortuary amulet

AN ANTIQUITY DEALER in New York has put in my hands for decipherment a charm similar to those which I treated in this

JOURNAL, vol. 31, 272 ff. It is a strip of silver foil, 4 x 2 inches, with the inscription running with the length. In this narrow strip there are nineteen lines, with correspondingly minute characters, the reading of which is often best made out from the reverse side. A considerable portion of the legend is legible, but consists mostly of stock phrases of adjuration, names of angels (e. g. Baraḳiel, Pumiēl, Shamshiel, Heḥiel, Ḳanathiel), divine names, and kabbalistic letters. It is not worth while to repeat the broken and trite passages that can be deciphered. That it is a mortuary charm appears from the phrase יחיס שנרא 'may he spare the corpse'. The name of the beneficiary is not legible. Towards the end may be read: בריך .תה בן בדיאל 'Blessed is X son of Badiel'. The latter name is found in the Bible and also, as בדי, in the Samaritan ostraka. There is one repeated phrase on which some scholar may throw some light: 'Depart (to the Evil Spirit) מן מיגרה ונאוין.' For further specimens of this kind reference may be made to a charm from Amwas published by H. Vincent in *Revue biblique*, 1908, 382, and another from Aleppo published by M. Schwab in *Journal asiatique*, ser. 10, 7. 5 (1906).

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